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BEEKEEPING FOR THE BEGINNER:

A radio talk prepared by E. L. Sechrist, Associate Agriculturist, in charge, Pacific Coast Bee Culture Field Station, Bureau of Entomology, United States Department of Agriculture, and delivered by Bobb Nichols, during the Western Farm and Home Hour Thursday, April 21, 1932, through Station KGO and eight other stations associated with the NBC-KGO network, Pacific Division, National Broadcasting Company.

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There is an annual crop of beginners in beekeeping, just as there is of amateur gardeners. Many beginners fail to consider that successful beekeeping requires considerable study and experience, and that more is needed than to hive a swarm of bees in a box and hope for a crop of honey. Such procedure is no more likely to lead to success in beekeeping than in any other branch of agriculture. It has been stated by experienced fruit growers that the chief obstacle in the way of making a living from ten acres of fruit is the tendency of the amateur to "get out and burn up the roads" when he should be at home doing essential work on his orchard. So it is with bees.

The beginner who wants a few colonies of bees for pollination of his fruit trees, for a home supply of honey, or with the intention of working into commercial beekeeping would do well to read some good literature on the subject before purchasing any bees. The United States Department of Agriculture publishes much good information. A circular listing these publications and other general information of value to beekeepers may be secured free of charge by a request to the United States Pacific Coast Bee Culture Laboratory at the University Farm, Davis, California.

The prospective beekeeper should select his first colonies carefully, and had better purchase them from some beekeeper nearby, from whom he can obtain some practical demonstrations in handling bees, and advice in emergencies. If possible the queen heading each colony should be a young one.

Colonies in boxes may also be purchased and the bees transferred to modern hives according to instructions given in the free literature. This is good work for the ambitious beginner who wants first hand experience at once, and it is also very interesting.

Care should be taken also that the purchased colonies are populous and in good condition. When the weather is warm and bees are flying, the hive should appear to be well filled with bees if the cover is removed for inspection. In the spring, it is not usually necessary that the hive contain much honey, although ten or fifteen pounds of honey should always be present in the hive, otherwise, the development of the colony to honey-storing population will be retarded.

The free literature available will also suggest what equipment besides bees is necessary, while names of dealers in bee supplies, from whom catalogues may be obtained, will be sent on request to the Pacific Coast Bee Culture Laboratory.

Beginners should be warned that bees, like other farm stock, are subject to diseases and that, if they are not cared for properly, they will become not only valueless but a menace to other bees in the vicinity. There is a law providing for inspection of apiaries, and anyone who purchases bees would do well to insist that the bees he plans to purchase be inspected and have a clean bill of health. If not, he may find out later that the inspector will recommend that his bees be destroyed by fire.

How much honey may the beekeeper expect from a hive of bees? The average yield is about 50 pounds, but the good beekeeper will expect twice or three times that amount. And if one is planning on a livelihood from bees, he will want to develop his business to at least 500 hives which will mean an investment of \$10.00 to \$15.00 per hive, although, at this time of low prices, some apiaries are offered for sale at bargains. The beginner should, however, start with not more than 4 or 5 hives, and increase his holdings as experience warrants.

Not all persons can be successful beekeepers. It is a business requiring careful attention to numerous details at the exact time required by the season and the development of the colony. There is no "rule-of-thumb" method of management which will prove successful. The successful beekeeper will be one who remains a student as long as he keeps bees. While the study and work is most interesting, it is the job of the specialist or the lobbyist, and not for the misguided individual who expects the bees to work for nothing and board themselves.

The advice to a budding author not to write unless you just can't help it is good advice for the prospective beekeeper as well. Don't take up beekeeping unless you just can't help it. And then, if you take it up properly, you certainly will have a good time over it if you do it as a hobby, and if you do it professionally, choosing a good honey-producing region, you can make a living, provided you also learn how to sell your crop of honey at a profit.
